

## Chapter 15

### Technical, Pedagogical, and Cultural Considerations for Language Learning in MUVES

Technology has been growing at a rapid pace throughout the last decade. These tools help provide effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity in education especially for distance education. It has supported safe environments for students and has given students opportunities to explore their education through Web-based technologies. Chapter 15 discusses various aspects of language learning with Multi-User Virtual Environments (MUVES). MUVES supplies tools for second and foreign-language instruction. This allows literary practices to collaborate with social networking, using tools such as Facebook, MySpace, and Xanga. The tools help to establish various meaningful opportunities for language learners. Learners can explore their own identities individually through the activities available in virtual communities.

Second Life (SL), a well-known MUVE, supplies a fulfilling environment for internet users to interact. SL has current online instructions and resources including a variety of media formats. The performances of the students are communicated through virtual avatars. Students may create avatars based on personal preferences. SL gives opportunities for students to review and reflect on their individual virtual experiences. Second Life allows students to have a second chance to analyze their own progress and performance.

An experiment was conducted between American graduate students and Chinese university students. The experiment influenced Chinese educators to further move towards constructivist perspectives on learning and instruction. The experiment was an inclusion of SL into a two-hour speaking course for the Chinese students. The activities were centered around globalization since there are similar understandings world-wide. English-speaking skills are the primary focus for the class. This allows students to practice what they have learned with Americans throughout the experiment. First Chinese participants were asked to interview American students about their own perspectives on globalization. They were then asked to write a university newsletter to practice their oral skills. The American participants had to interview the Chinese participants about life in China. This helped the Chinese students to practice their listening skills. SL provides interactions that are related to real-life. The interactions are facilitated through SL virtual environments including both Internet and computer applications.

Overall, this experiment and these ideas for distance learning provide a good environment for students to acquire knowledge. Facilitators are able to have structure by setting specific times for assignments and detailed procedures. This helps students to be able to have the same interaction. The reflections that students were given to do at the end of the experiment were beneficial to their language-learning experience. The reflections provided guidelines and proper evaluations for the experiment. In this Chapter different constructivist strategies were introduced. The Web-based tools that were used throughout the chapter provide a wide variety of examples for teachers in a distance learning class.

